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22 PAGES OF VIRUS NEWS & COMMENT

214,894
TOTAL GLOBAL CASES
AS OF MARCH 18, 2020

727
TOTAL CANADIAN CASES
AS OF MARCH 18, 2020

$82B
CANADIAN AID PACKAGE

PETER J. THOMPSON / NATIONAL POST

A pedestrian walks across the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls between Canada and the U.S. during a shutdown to non-essential traffic. Story, A4

CANADA SHUTS BORDER, UNVEILS AID PACKAGE

> There are still many Canadians stranded there who need to get out.
>
> — Jakubovicz, a medical doctor in Toronto, who managed to finally get a flight out of Morocco. Page A6

Lies in a time of plague

Terry Glavin

'Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky." That's from Albert Camus' classic 1947 novel The Plague, an allegory of fascism that eerily describes our current circumstances, up against that deadly microscopic beast that first began devouring people in China's Wuhan province last November. "There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise."

The thing is, there isn't much in the way of a helpful real-world precedent to draw from, now that we're all self-isolating and social-distancing, and movie theatres are closing along with the bars and restaurants, and the schools, and the hockey rinks, and almost all the important places where public life ordinarily unfolds.

See GLAVIN on A12

$27B just a start, Morneau says

Temporary boost to child tax credit, payroll subsidy

Jesse Snyder and Stuart Thomson

OTTAWA • Finance Minister Bill Morneau laid out a sweeping $27-billion aid package on Wednesday, part of an effort to shield families and businesses from economic fallout amid the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

The aid package, which came alongside another $55 billion in tax deferrals and low-interest loans, is the first of several measures set to be announced by the Liberal government in a bid to lessen the blow from the virus, which has pummeled global markets and brought the Canadian economy to a screeching halt.

The measures included expanding eligibility criteria for employment insurance, a temporary boost in monthly payments of the Canada Child Benefit, and a one-time GST tax credit for low-income families, among other things. The policies come as part of a joint effort by the Bank of Canada and private lenders in recent days, which have slashed interest rates and deferred mortgage payments for struggling households.

See AID on A8

When it's always closing time

As coronavirus shutters bars, our cities lose something special — their soul

Calum Marsh

There are bars where you can get a drink and bars where you can get something more. Such bars offer refuge, in the original sense of the word, "the state of being sheltered from pursuit, danger or difficulty."

A city's mainstay bars are its way stations, fixtures of comfort where we can find relief from mundane turmoil, where the challenges and obligations of the day are temporarily discontinued, held briefly apart from the pleasure of the moment. The best bars are where you want to be when you're having a great time or a hard time, where you retreat in the face of a day's turbulence or head to celebrate its minor wins. When things look really bleak — when the entire world is in the throes of catastrophe, when our borders are closing and we are sent home from work, isolated and frightened — the warmth of our favourite bars would be hugely reassuring.

See BARS on A6

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OIL FALLS BELOW BREAK-EVEN POINT FOR PRODUCERS.
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HOSPITALS CLEAR OUT WARDS FOR POTENTIAL COVID-19 WAVE.
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ON MY STREET, WE'RE NOT DOING THIS ALONE.
Kay, Page A13